

Alternatives Compared;
OR,
WHAT SHALL THE RICH DO
TO
BE SAFE?
TO WHICH ARE PREFIXED,
REMARKS
ON THE
MANAGEMENT OF THE NAVY,
AND ON
Several Recent Occurrences.

BY
THOMAS BEDDOES, M. D.

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TO THE

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IN political discussions it is common to borrow metaphors from the accidents of navigation. The resemblance between Great Britain and a vessel in distress, from a furious tempest, must be confessed to be striking. Her position, together with the means and chance of preservation, are perpetually varying. The remonstrance that follows was written only in March, nor have I introduced into this new edition any considerations founded upon subsequent events. Had it been *then* possible to rouse the majority of the rich to well-directed exertions, they might, I believe, have escaped much anxiety, suffering, and repentance. But if any one could flatter himself that it were not now too late, he must conclude from their conduct at the meetings, respecting the dismissal of ministers, that their infatuation is incorrigible. In most places they canvassed for the minister. In many they had recourse to practices, from which, in confidence of their cause, the friends of liberty and peace religiously abstained. They were even imprudent enough to sharpen the sword of injustice against themselves. With an instance of this kind, the Author had an opportunity of being accurately acquainted.

quainted. It took place in the second city of the kingdom. *There*, to make sure of his object, an Alderman acted as porter of the private door. *There* the Mayor refused to entrust any question to a meeting which so much pains had been taken to pack; and *thence* was sent, in favour of ministers, an address, couched in terms purporting it to be the deliberate and *voted* act of a fair public meeting. In that, and in other places, men of influence and property have endeavoured to make the people consider *dissatisfaction with the present ministry* as the same thing with *disloyalty*. Lord Fortescue is at this moment advertising a counter-petition, "as the means of removing from the character of the *loyal* county of Devon the shade that may be cast on it "by misrepresentation." The compliment to his promoter in dignity, Mr. Pitt, is doubtless fine; but the loyal Earl seems not sufficiently to have considered, that such compliments to ministers are always at the expense of kings.

This disposition of the body, consisting of the landed, the monied, and the commercial interests, must have great influence on the fate of the nation. It deserves the utmost attention from those political speculators, who, supposing that the minister and the people cannot long remain in their present situations with regard to each other, endeavour to anticipate the nature of the approaching crisis.

To a considerable portion of the above-mentioned class Mr. Pitt has dispensed honours or emoluments. Unless some accident that defies conjecture should dispossess him of his station, he may depend upon the support of these men and of their connexions, whatever may be the nature and consequences of his measures. Should accident give him a successor, they will be as immoveable by his oratory as they have hitherto shewn themselves to that of his opponents.

But no statesman can bribe a whole community, and great favours can only be conferred on a small proportion of individuals. For what is given must first be taken.

While the higher ranks have gradually become more and more subservient to ministerial influence, the political miracles of modern days have excited universal curiosity with respect to the social relations that ought to subsist between man and man. Through the channel of curiosity, knowledge has flowed rapidly downwards; and the event will probably shew that the improvement of the *third estate* has advanced faster than the degeneracy of their superiors.

Knowledge renders us more sensible and resentful of injustice: but I consider the promotion of union and co-operation among mankind as its most conspicuous and certain effect. It is exactly to men in general what discipline is to soldiers. Its operation may be traced through all the stages of refinement, from the combination of wandering savages against wild beasts, to the noblest efforts against civil and ecclesiastical oppression, which history records.

Among the facts that might be adduced to shew the improvement of the lower classes, the conduct of the seamen at Portsmouth is perhaps the most decisive. Here we have seen a set of men, the least accustomed to read, reflect, and act systematically, exhibiting the ability of consummate politicians, and the moderation of the most chastised philosophers.

Men are moved only by their ideas and feelings. The ideas and feelings of the two grand divisions of Englishmen are likely to move them in opposite directions. But it is in external events (of which the course is hourly changing) to give effect to the moral causes of civil distraction, which exist in so great force among us. Upon the whole, it seems not probable that the most flagitious minister, how-
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ever seconded by the corruption and pusillanimity of the majority among the opulent, can establish and maintain a military despotism. The machinery itself would fail him in so long time.

Every one who desires that public shame should overtake public demerit, must lament that the dispersion of the members of opposition took place so early. Two great events required full discussion. One was the last mutiny among the seamen; the other, the report of the Irish House of Commons on the United Irishmen.

However unwarrantable might have been the attempt of the sailors in the Thames to take advantage of the situation of the country to enforce unreasonable demands, want of vigilance and of judgment would probably have been made out against Administration. It is certain that Mr. Pitt was early apprised of a desire of increase of wages among the sailors. On Monday, Feb. 25, 1793, Mr. Brandling presented a petition from the port of Shields, stating, that "if the pay of able-bodied seamen was raised to 40s. per month, there would be no occasion for impressing;" and that "the expense attending the impress service would be sufficient to defray the advance."—"Mr. Pitt did not feel himself called upon to give any opinion on the general question, but, considering the place from which the application came, as well as the nature of it, and the present existing circumstances of the nation, he could not consider himself as authorised to give that recommendation from his Majesty, which alone could enable the House to take up this petition, or to advise his Majesty to give any such recommendation." (Debates.) Who can doubt but the sentiment expressed in the petition was working in the minds of the sailors till the affair at Portsmouth? And could not a prudent statesman have kept a constant eye upon the disposition of the navy,

navy, and anticipated all equitable demands? But the appointment of Lord Chatham to the Admiralty settles the question of the obligations of the *bulwark of Britain* to Mr. Pitt.

If a British minister be responsible for the state of Ireland, the fact of 100,000 men leagued there against the government, is a strong ground for impeachment. One hundred thousand men, capable of bearing arms, are the flower of not much less than a sixth part of the Irish people. Every individual who entered into this covenant, knew that he risked an ignominious death on the gallows, or a violent death in the field. And shall it be assumed, without inquiry, that so great a body could take this step without the fault of Administration? Persons willing to promote confusion have existed in all countries. But in none have their endeavours succeeded, without the co-efficient of ministerial folly or cruelty. Seditious sentiments may have been disseminated with ever so much industry, but discontent has no where ripened into great conspiracies or general insurrections, unless the government itself have been constituted or administered seditiously.

WHAT SHALL THE RICH DO

TO

BE SAFE?



I HAVE heard it remarked, by a shrewd and successful trader, that *a man is saved in the next world by faith; in this, by the want of it.* In whom you shall confide is seldom a point of slight deliberation; and, in many emergencies, you perish or escape, according as you decide. The frowning aspect of the present juncture, summons the great to enter into serious and sincere council with themselves. The past must be revised, that provision may be made for the future. The evidence of the crisis is strong and full. The parties concerned are required but to approach it with docility, and to sit upon their own fate, as true and uncorrupt jurors, divested of all prejudgments. They must not forget that there is a disposition indispensable to the discovery of political as well as physical truth. Let them be content to take themselves only for what they are; subjects and interpreters, not arbitrary comptrollers, of the laws of nature. This doctrine of philosophical humility may not be very congenial to the temper of those whom the implicit obedience of dependants has led to confound authority with intellect. Without it, however, all examination of men and things would be fruitless. And it would be perhaps less waste of time to study the prodigies of the Apocalypse; that, by contem-

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plating the calamities of imagination, they may learn to sustain those of reality with greater fortitude.

“ How are the possessors of influence to exert it for their own and the public security? Shall they continue, reckless and passive, in their leading-strings? adopt a temporising system? or endeavour, in union with their inferiors, to obtain a change of men and measures?” These questions the hurricane of events has to-day brought full before them: yet a little while, and they will be swept out of their competence for ever.

That desperate attachment of the great, which has emboldened a rash administration to embark in so many desperate schemes, is not wholly to be ascribed to favouritism. This weakness never affects many individuals in the same manner. The paradoxical public conduct which we have so long witnessed in our wealthy countrymen is not to be explained by saying that they have found, for successive years, a perverse pleasure in humouring the caprices of a junto. To enable one of its members to chuck rupees by lacks into the pockets of his India dependants, and another to indulge a childish vanity, in shewing the world what fine things he can do for his family and friends, is not a purpose capable of uniting and keeping compacted so numerous a body.

I am likewise far from imputing to the British nobility that selfishness, which, if we may believe Doctor Smith, proved fatal to the consequence of their precursors, the ancient barons. They do not take for their motto, *all for ourselves, and nothing for other people* (Wealth of Nations, ii. 125); but they doubtless feel well inclined to keep to themselves what they have to themselves. Idleness and vanity are not purely patrician qualities. We of plebeian origin have wherewithal to appreciate the convenience of being honourable, independently of merit: and

and he who has learned but as much of the effects of pride, habit, and possession, as every man may learn without going out of himself, will scarcely expect the proprietors of privilege to consent that all infants should be started into life upon the same footing of privilege. Does any one descry Innovation about to rob his offspring, with intent to set up their birthright as a prize, for which the vulgar shall have the right of entering the lists? That parent will be judged to betray a disgraceful want of natural feeling, if he stop long to calculate risks, before he resolves to oppose himself to the injustice.

The landed commoner or country gentleman I consider as no less acutely sensible towards conventional respectability than his superior in precedence. Looking forward to rank, and morally assimilated to the peer, he will, in cases of danger to hereditary distinctions, be equally actuated by self-love, parental love, love of ease, of enjoyment, and pre-eminence. They will both agree to make the cause of their fellows in another country their own.

These fears, and this sympathy, drew his ancient adherents closer round the minister, and brought new crowds of followers to his standard. All were eager to quell the example of civic equality in France. In the sense of the British noblesse, the contest had no other object; nor, without this end in view, should we ever, in spite of the vulture cravings of our merchants for West-India prey, have engaged in it.

I appeal to the past language and present persuasion of the affluent and the noble. It was not in a squabble about the choice of regicides in which they meant to take part. That a baffled intriguer, intent solely upon bilking disgrace, should assert the capacity of *this* in preference to *that* horde of levellers to maintain the relations of peace and amity, is an

occurrence to which parallels may be found in all the records of ambitious hypocrisy. But Lord Fitzwilliam's numerous associates in political sentiment, whenever they hear expositions of the object of the war softened down to existing circumstances, must smile contempt upon the subterfuge. Each conscious countenance must declare to the other—

Non hæc in fœdera veni.

What the minister wishes is plain enough. He would have the encouragement given by himself, and by his partners in power, to the strong desire and sanguine hope of re-establishing whatever had been overturned in France, blotted from memory. No wonder——He has his sufficient reasons. He may dread lest their balked expectations should warn his supporters against trusting for *security* to that front and those tones which so lately promised *conquest*. It can certainly afford him little satisfaction to have the Mr. Pitt of 1793 compared with that Mr. Pitt, who, in 1796, stooped to receive, among the full-coiffed and long-robed governments of Europe, a bald, unkinged, unpriested democracy, shorn of ever-green honours, and gay with no budding distinctions. He must be aware, that Mr. Pitt's whole consequence with foreign nations and future ages, depended upon success in dragooning the French into submission. Four years ago, many a solitary half hour may have glided imperceptibly away, while he was busy in thinking whose image would offer itself to the spectators of the victorious march of the confederates into Paris; heading the legions, eclipsing the generals, august beyond mortality, and every moment borrowing increase of majesty from the rekindled lustre of a father's triumphs. Then, belike, "*his great mind*," buoyant upon a balloon of visions, "*was up to the crisis he is called to act in*." Ere this, the babbler has probably
subsidised

subsided to humbler ideas of his destiny; and he may be sensible that a mock-statue, exhibiting him among the founders of the new republic, would be the emblem most suitable to the estimation in which he is doomed to be held.

The inability of administration to crush the monster JACOBINISM having been acknowledged by their own most public acts, what course remains for the champions of the old temporal and spiritual authorities in France? Are they to rush on in blindfold consistency? Or has the cause of social order so irretrievably suffered in the hands of a heaven-born statesman, that to mention further efforts in its behalf, sounds like insulting the unhappy with their misfortunes?

One ardent mind has been proof against discomfiture, as maniacs resist the benumbing power of an arctic winter. I speak of that singular statesman, whose phrenzy has of late been regarded as prophetic, though it had used to pass for the mere symptoms of vulgar mental disorder. All true Britons are advised by this, their oracle, to tend at every hazard for the same point, striking, however, into a new road, but following the old guides; as if, after all, their fidelity and intelligence were nothing to be questioned.

From the constancy with which the nation sustained the difficulties of an eighteen years war against Louis XIV. our undaunted veteran infers the reasonableness of perseverance. We know what was the noble incentive of our forefathers: nor shall I waste a moment in inquiring whether the people can be instigated by the zeal of liberty to second the views of the present ministry at the hazard of life and fortune. I will only try how the precedent applies in another way. A magnanimous monarch, we are told, formed a vast design "*on true mechanical principles*." His workmanship did not disgrace his
con-

conceptions. The machine, as long as its powers were needed, went on by the impulse it received from its inventor's hand. So much for WILLIAM, the monarch. Next comes WILLIAM, the minister. Under his superintendence, the machinery of the state seems clogged, and ready to run into disorder. The public concerns have little of the exterior of prosperity. Hence we feel discouraged; but we are perhaps discouraged by deceitful appearances. Strict search may disclose grounds for expecting final success. There are undertakings, and those not the least lucrative, where the returns at the outset are small, because the judicious application of labour and capital has ensured ample future compensation. Our advocate for confidence is doubtless prepared to shew, that the state engineer, in whose behalf he pleads, has completed his works in a masterly manner, and that only a little further advance is wanting to put them properly in motion.

This is the only method of arguing which his side of the question admits; by no other, if they have only a legal lot of discretion, can those who have to find means be made to rest satisfied with him who undertakes to find method. Let us see how the point is handled:

"Through the false policy of the war, the greatest skill has been worse than uselessly employed to conduct the greatest military apparatus." *"The whole has been but one error."* *"The war ought not to have been a war of calculation."* *"It was matter of choice; yet the enemy was attacked where he was invincible; spared where he was ready to dissolve by his own internal disorders."* *"Our plan was neither good for offence nor defence."* *"They (we) adopted a plan of war, against the success of which there was something little short of mathematical demonstration."* *"They (we) acted through the whole, as if really wishing the conservation of Jacobin power."*

Such,

Such, according to their ablest and best-paid advocate, is our British directory in council. Their magnanimity and wisdom have entitled them to equal applause in debate. The present ministry, says Mr. Burke, "*throw the light only on one side of their cause.*"—"They never entered into the peculiar and distinctive character of the war. They spoke neither to the understanding, nor the heart. Cold as ice themselves, they could never kindle in our breasts a spark of that zeal which is necessary to a conflict with an adverse zeal." The sound majority of the nation have "*never so much as had the question fairly stated to them.*"

By so discordant a tune no listener can be simple enough to be piped into a persuasion that, under this administration, "*what has been lost in the field, in the field may be regained.*" Dramatic writers, after exhibiting a stripling, profligate and thoughtless, through more than four acts, sometimes dismiss us, with his sudden transformation, into the decent, afraid master of a family. And so much has been allowed to poetic licence. But there exists a senseless prodigality, which it is not possible to conceive corrected into thrifty wisdom. The instant conversion of Mr. Pitt and his accomplices into a cabinet capable of rescuing us from the state to which blood and treasures lavished "*for support of the Jacobin system*" have reduced us, stands conspicuous among the examples of prodigy that defy imagination.

Exhortation, therefore, is vain. The great will concur no more in a system of hostilities directed to the overthrow of republicanism. The frantic paroxysm is past. But who can tell by what fatal torpor it is to be succeeded? They who refuse the precipice, by allowing themselves to slide down the slope, may equally get into the gulf which lies at the bottom of both. There is a system less outrageous,

rageous, but not less ruinous, than exterminating war; and into this I fear lest the favourites of fortune should be betrayed by the joint operation of habit, attachment, and example. Those who know any thing of the higher orders in society know their general impatience of continued attention. Have they serious business? It must be brought before them prepared for instant dispatch: to disentangle its perplexities would be too troublesome. They cannot be put out of their lazy, pick-tooth mood. Their agent always sees a fine fertile field of fraud open before him. And to these same votaries of indolence the minister is only a steward, with more repulsive reckonings. Him, therefore, they audit with less awakened ear, and he finds his facility of imposition as much greater as his concerns are larger than those of the private steward.

Again, sufferings we have neither experienced, nor seen excite in us but a lukewarm sympathy. The mourning of decency resolves itself into a process of the art of dying: the pity of decency is an affair of words. Twenty thousand poor families starved, an unknown and countless rabble killed off, without interruption to their enjoyments, will have no systematic influence on the conduct of the mass of the affluent, however well they may be disposed. Except in individuals of reflection more than commonly exercised, the smallest opposite passion will be more than a counterbalance for commiseration. To the rest, the idea of the execution of a minister will be a thousand times more shocking than all this misery, and all this carnage.

The case of a former war minister is in the memory of many, in the knowledge of all. Regard to human safety does not easily run into over-delicacy. When a domestic animal is by chance the death of any member of a family, he is, very properly,

perly, put for ever out of fight, though moral turpitude be not imputable to the brute creation. After the American war, how did this protective feeling operate as to Lord North? I know not whether it be true that he was from the first averse to that disastrous enterprise; but, when it had become desperate, he persisted in it with an obstinacy against which there ought surely to be some safeguard for men's lives as much as against malice aforethought. The most guilty motives were assigned to his conduct. Mr. Burke, I think, charged the ministry with persevering to shed blood, merely because they could not make peace and continue a ministry. Lord North, notwithstanding, was brought to no account; no brand was set upon him; the name of a private criminal excited more horror; nay, he carried with him out of office every thing but ministerial influence. He went into retirement, not into disgrace; he still held his head high in the senate; and, what in an ancient historian would appear incredible, after all the havoc in which he had borne so principal a share, he enjoyed, perhaps, more consideration than any British statesman. How great was his consequence in Mr. Fox's judgment, while the gashes he had inflicted on his country were still unclosed, appeared from the famous coalition.

From Lord North's example, I conclude that the great, in spite of some interruption to their enjoyments from the prevailing alarms, will, in general, feel no active or lasting indignation against Mr. Pitt. However they may distrust or condemn the minister, they will still screen the man. He will desire time either to frame new pretexts for continuing in office, or to compose his skirts as he retreats. In either case, whatever be the danger of temporising, he will have no cause to complain

of want of complaisance on the part of his old supporters.

On a superficial review of our history, it may be vainly supposed, that peace and war are for ever to succeed each other like the seasons: the summer of peace, as if by a natural necessity, regularly repairing the ravages of war. Treachery lurks even under the example of the American war. The issue with regard to America failed to make us pause over the difficulty of forcing laws upon an unwilling people. The issue with regard to ourselves may render us too little sensible to the danger of having once more engaged in a similar adventure. A familiar spirit is said to have admonished Socrates from wrong. Some people have internal feelings, by which they can judge with how much of active and passive fortitude the determination to be free can inspire others. The heart of Mr. Pitt does not appear to have been *less* susceptible of these feelings than that of Lord North; nor in his successive military measures has he been *more* unfortunate or unwise. But what a difference in the absolute and relative circumstances of the two nations, against which these two politicians have had to contend! We cannot imagine the transatlantic constitution to partake so much of asbestos, that no provocation could inflame the love of liberty into ambition and vengeance. But as the two parties viewed the designs of the British cabinet, the Americans would feel rather less indignant. For to tax unrepresented colonies is somewhat a less violent proceeding than to conquer and divide a great independent state. This last is the greatest of political injuries, aggravated by the greatest of insults. The French may have been falsely, but they seem to have been generally persuaded, that a worse than Polish outrage was designed them. What has been
done

done to draw this sting that rankles in their minds? We entered no protest against the *eagle of Valenciennes*. Even the treaty of Pilnitz has not been published by authority; yet its publication, if it contain no article of this flagrant tendency, would have gone far towards generating amicable sentiments.

America, whatever might have been her inclination, was not in a state to pass from defence to offence; she had no means of putting in force the barbarous law of retaliation; we had but to withdraw, and the contest was at an end; there were hardly two parties to a pacification. The other contending powers desired but the disunion of the daughter from the parent state. With the French, war was far from having lost that character under which it exhibited itself a century ago, when it was a summer sport for the *grand monarque*.

There are, I think, four alternatives between which our present situation permits us the choice:

1. We may call back the ministry, as it is at this moment constituted, to the original purpose of hostilities, which was nothing less than the *unconditional submission* of the republicans.

2. We may exert ourselves to promote the substitution of disciples of the school of Burke, in the room of the present Chancellor of the Exchequer and certain of his colleagues. Those who have been rendered

“ — fiercer by despair ”

have no excuse, but in the infirmities of declining years, for forbearing to call the MASTER himself into a situation to help to make good what he proposes.

3. We may acquiesce in the part to which we are reduced, when we desire a change of the wind.

We may sit quiet, wishing that *things would come round*.

Upon the respective eligibility of these measures it would be waste of words to say more. It remains to state and examine the fourth alternative.

4. We may bestir ourselves against the ministry with as much alertness as if we had to rescue all we hold dear from a building in flames.

I know not how it fares with others, who, when *the rulers took council together, and the multitude were TAUGHT to imagine a vain thing*, foresaw and foretold the disasters that were preparing. For myself, I can neither feel nor express myself with equal warmth. Is it that some minds are touched to the quick by enormities detected in the meditation? Is indignation a feeling which cannot maintain itself long in its original force? Or is it blunted by contempt for the authors of evil, when their machinations have been blasted? Every just prognostic must be followed by more or less of self-approbation. Can self-approbation soften us towards the betrayers and destroyers of mankind?—He that simply desired to save the unwary may have yet a more cogent reason for stating calmly the evils of which he had forewarned with vehemence. He may know that the contrary exercise of rhetoric is often but the triumph of malignity over distress; and he can never suppose words capable of conveying so exact an idea of phenomena as the senses themselves.

The public condition is, in most cases, a sufficient test of the ability of those who have long managed the public concerns. To compare Great Britain as it is, with Great Britain as it was, requires no labour of research. The distinguishing circumstances are obvious to sight: and they are within a narrow field of vision. We *had* a commerce such as human industry had never before created; we *had* unbounded credit; a revenue increasing; a public

public debt decreasing, and capable (under wiser management) of a rapid reduction; specie was driven in to us from all parts of Europe. The repute of the paper of the Bank of England was not only untarnished by suspicion, but its notes were often preferred to cash. We had attained that *prosperity* which, to politicians by profession, is the supreme good; and which the political philosopher may regret, when it is redeemed by no diffused and popular blessings. In a rapid decline of five years, our great staple manufactories have been reduced almost to suspension; the merchant is saddened by the blank prospect of full and undisturbed warehouses; the new orders are insufficient for that half-starved remnant of workmen, whom unwholesome climates and the sword have not yet destroyed. The languid movement of commerce is principally forced by the pernicious stimulus of war; specie is disappearing; credit expiring; the circulating capital dwindling; the fixed capital threatened with dilapidation; the apprehension of that last of all evils to a commercial people, a forced paper currency, gaining ground; the prolongation of the war next to impossible; peace difficult to obtain; and, at this critical moment, our nearest and most remote dependencies are in a state of progressive discontent, threatening civil disturbances. The wish for an asylum, has crossed the mind of many a father anxious for his family; and corps of volunteers are forming at home, avowedly, among other purposes, to protect property and persons against plunder and outrage. That precious inheritance which every Englishman derived from the exalted reputation of his country, is irretrievably gone. We shall rank no more as

“ —lords of human kind.”

On the first report of republican successes, nice observers of the emotions must have seen the flush of patriotic

patriotic fellow-feeling overspread the cheek of the most loyal emigrant. The achievements on the frontiers have almost effaced the crimes committed by the base assassins of the capital. In these circumstances, we have a sure omen of the estimation in which the two nations will in future be held. Henceforward, whenever they meet on a neutral soil, the Frenchman, instead of giving way as formerly, will think himself entitled to elbow our countryman. English ascendancy depended not on any thing peculiar to the climate. It may be gained by any people, whose powers are not palsied by some species of tyrannical restraint. It will be lost wherever councils are followed like those which have prevailed in Britain for the greater part of the last thirty years.

We have here no short catalogue of calamities; and they come too near to those, in whose description, when they afflicted France, the minister and his favourers loved to riot. Added to this, we have an adversary lynx-eyed to discern, and swift to seize her advantages: an adversary that has just converted her forced paper into specie, her enemies into allies, her anarchy into order. We have a ministry with whom nothing has been more familiar than declarations of satisfaction, all the time the affairs of the two countries have been in full straightforward speed to the points they have respectively attained.

These gross facts will satisfy every sincere inquirer. It is scarce necessary he should be told how often the conductors of our affairs have rejected the invitations of opportunity to maintain or to restore peace. What happened fifteen years ago must immediately happen again. The people will become universally persuaded, *that the present men are not the men either for a peace system or a war system.* To this persuasion will succeed just astonishment, how individuals possessing certain talents with means of information, could
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conceive the ideas on which the authors of this train of misfortunes have proceeded; and how millions of rational beings could tamely behold their dearest interests entrusted to persons capable of such wild conceptions, and enterprises so insane.

The principal departments of state are filled by persons of three descriptions. Among the last appointed, one man only stands forward with pretensions. Mr. —— is distinguished chiefly by intemperance of mind. His language, when his associates are not obliged to condemn him to silence, breathes the genuine spirit of cannibalism; and it is difficult not to suppose that he could feast with pleasure upon the heart of one whom he should be pleased to style a Jacobin, provided the culprit belonged to the number of his ancient friends. His passions, ungovernable as they may seem, do yet in reality ebb and flow at another's nod. Notwithstanding his furious and indiscriminate invectives, it is scarce a matter of doubtful history that he was an approving spectator of the early scenes of the revolution in France. We are certain that he is the author of no measure that any man might not have conceived, waking or asleep. Charity will dismiss him, with a wish that his last moments may not be haunted by the spectre of the gallant ——, escorted by a train of butchered emigrants.

Upon the whole second division, history had pronounced. Their names were committed to everlasting memory; for they figured among the projectors and conductors of the war against our American colonies. Was it from dissatisfaction with the distinction they had already obtained, that they gave once more the reins to ambition? Without doubt, their avarice of fame must at length be satiated. They have been favoured beyond the lot of their fellows. The varied annals of mankind furnish no instance where a knot of politicians have been

been permitted by fate to advance so far in a second career, after completing, as *they* completed, the first.

The people seem never to have reposed in these sages the confidence which talents, joined to experience, commonly command. It was as if they enjoyed power by public connivance rather than public deference. If it be true that the most secret thoughts are drawn forth by the power of wine, it must be most true of those who have been least practised to dissemble. Yet in 1793, when the multitude, intoxicated with liquor and with lies, disturbed all the echoes of the kingdom with cries for war, did any one hear the names of Jenkinson or Wedderburne, of Eden or Dundas, pronounced with applause or expectation?

All hopes rested upon a man, comparatively raw in every concern of state, and absolutely a novice in the conduct of war. On Mr. Pitt, confidence was originally bestowed; and to him, as far as the ministry at present enjoy confidence, they owe its continuance: he, therefore, becomes the great object of attention in the present stage of our inquiry. Should it appear that the origin of his extensive popularity was *extraneous*, or independent of merit and services, and that his faculties of heart and head are in unison with the distresses of the state, it would be no longer problematical to whom we are to lay the disasters we endure, and the dangers we dread.

Divines have been at pains to delineate the situation of the human race on the appearance of the Messiah.—The state of Britain, towards the close of the American war, requires no elaborate description. The deluded, injured, and almost despairing, inhabitants had long been panting for a deliverer. What is there strange, when a people, thus disposed, are transported beyond prudence by the first ray of hope? Less than a descendant and

a namesake of their idol, CHATHAM, with the shadow of his father's talents, would, at such a moment, sooth their sufferings, and dispel their apprehensions. If they yielded to first specious appearances, they only committed an act of precipitancy, against which neither the lessons of history nor the actual experience of calamity have been sufficient to warn the mass of mankind. The abuse of credulity, arising in part from goodness of heart, serves but to deepen the guilt of ambition; as we abhor an assassin the more for murdering a traveller, who, at a dangerous pass, too easily accepts his proffered protection.

The nature of language should render us fearful, lest we deceive ourselves or others when we employ general terms. There are few terms more fallacious than *ability*, when it is used alone. In many cases, the possessor of certain endowments or acquirements is asserted or denied to be *able*; and the dispute becomes interminable, less for want of facts, than for want of a previous settlement of the precise import which the word is to bear on the occasion. This ambiguity is the perpetual plague of political disputants.

Some powers of mind and body are far from implying other powers. There are even powers from which you may with confidence infer, that the possessor is deficient in certain other powers. There is no reason to suppose, because a passenger on board is an *able* dancer on the slack rope, that he is fit to take the helm when the ship is in distress. The chances are much against your scullion being clever at her needle; her occupation will make her hands too clumsy.

Mr. Pitt, beyond question, possesses *abilities*. His superior excellence, at least one of his great excellencies, consists in a good arrangement of words, accompanied by a good utterance. The last qualifies, to a certain degree, for the stage; in no re-

spect for the council-board. It will not be contended, that there exists a law of nature, which constitutes the rival of Mrs. Siddons the superior of Sully.

The voluble recitation of *your own* thoughts is but a semi-theatrical talent. The art, though unknown as a separate art in this age, flourished in Greece; and the more its professors, the SOPHISTS, came to be known, the less were they and their art esteemed. If it be desirable to estimate rightly the character of a man who has played such a part among his countrymen as Mr. Pitt, this historical fact is of great importance.

Were the difficult art of walking of no more general use than singing, it would not be more common. It is not necessary to the maintenance of many people, that they should carry on the two processes of speaking and thinking, with uniform celerity, long together. But almost all men, except idiots and incurable stammerers, may be taught this knack; as certainly, not, perhaps, so speedily, as to move harmonically to sounds, or to work a hand-saw and whistle. To touch with dexterity two rows of notes on the harpsichord would, in all probability, be found to require more application. A difference, without doubt, would appear in the attainments of different scholars; but not such as to deserve to be considered in delegating an important national trust.

Your pupil, if he have no glaring external or internal blemish, may not only be expected to become a proficient in declamation, but, as a collateral benefit of his education, he will probably acquire propensities of no mean effect in civil intercourse. He will come forth among mankind, ostentatious, subtle, overbearing, and selfish; or, at least, fully prepared to make any progress in these dispositions. In all respects he must be the opposite

sitate—I do not say of the philosopher, for the title is become opprobrious—but of him who, in sincerity, seeks the truth, and communicates what he believes.

It is his care *how* to speak, not *what* to think. In qualifying himself to harangue for any length of time upon either side of any question, he is labouring precisely to become double-tongued. He will have profited little by the discipline to which he has submitted, if it have not rendered him dexterous in ensnaring the incautious. This familiarity with fraud is of itself dangerous; and every thing here conspires to favour its debasing operation. By perpetual endeavours to infuse opinions into others, he establishes the habit of referring all their feelings to himself. To him, therefore, mankind will be estimable, odious, or indifferent, according to the attention they shall pay the object towards which he takes so much pains to draw their regard. Nor can we suppose that he will feel disinclined to measures which may force the appearance, when he finds he cannot win the reality. It is not an indifferent circumstance, that every display of oratory must be personal. He who can exhibit his powers, without the necessity of witnessing the effect, incurs, in a much less degree, the hazard of a corrupt mind. For human frailty will submit to unremitting temptation; and, at length, no artifices will be left untried by the performer to surprise the judgment of his audience. Then Vanity receives the submissions of her slave. Then she burns her mark into his mind; and, for a daily task, assigns him the fabrication of gins and traps to catch the applause of fools.

To this reasoning, the example of the modern advocate will be opposed. But the studies of the modern advocate are as little calculated to form him to the resemblance of the ancient sophist, as to render

him a disinterested lover of truth and justice. The sophist was free to linger on the smooth and flowery lawn of a common topic; and he could range the wilds of paradox at will. But in our courts and causes there are checks upon the wanton excursions of eloquence. In the schools of sophistry all was shadowy and fictitious. But in attestations, precedents, and statutes, there is something solid, by which to fix the understanding, and to hold it to moorings.

Rhetorical trimmings appear ill to suit the mind that is dressed in the sad and solemn garb of law. Our lawyers are not often poets, or fine writers; their studies do not seem exceedingly compatible with a taste for the elegancies of literature; nor, in fact, when they speak, are they found much to excel ordinary men in the talent of trundling the round and polished period * over the tongue.

Mr. Pitt's accomplishments and defects unite to declare how much the dangerous art of declamation must have been the object of his early assiduity. His lips seem never touched by the hallowed fire of genius. No sentiment strikes you as if projected by natural energy of mind. I know not how many weeks or months the hours he has harangued, added together, would make. But if, with such abundant opportunities, he be the only celebrated speaker, from whom have issued none of those brilliant or profound fallies which nations delight to repeat, the fact will shew how much the *mechanical* predominates over the *mental* ingredient in his orations.

You go along with him to the midst of an intricate period. You tremble for his grammar; but your apprehensions are premature. The most expert artisan has not a hand surer than his tongue.

* Mellitos verborum globulos.

This aptness can be no other than the result of continually reiterated efforts. His father, perhaps, knew not how to elevate and enlarge his conceptions; but he was able, and it is not to be doubted but he was earnest, to bestow on the son whom he destined to figure in debate, that part of eloquence which consists in assortment of words, in well-fashioned phrases, and in tones.

By an acquaintance and a close observer of the late Lord Chatham I have heard it said, that he himself submitted to read the English dictionary six times over. I think it was after he had acquired some distinction in the House of Commons. It is not necessary for me to make an application of the anecdote.

To solid men of business all this care of sounds would appear frivolous. They know that whatever is worth saying can be comprehended in few and uncultured words. The observation of mankind has not only taught them, that a supple tongue has no necessary connexion with effective talents; but that it ought to render a man suspected, as well with regard to his integrity as his efficiency. Oiliness of articulation, accompanied with a diction of studied softness, they reckon among the surest signs of an incapable impostor. It is a siren song, which men are seldom found to learn, but that they may overreach others in matters of trust, dealing, or opinion.

I know that there will be persons infatuated enough to rely for an exception upon the very class of examples, where, for a hundred reasons, the rule is likely to hold most strictly. No one, however, can pretend that a man's fluency goes any way towards proving his fitness for administering public affairs; and if it do not, where rests the proof of Mr. Pitt's fitness? What would have been his consequence, if this fluency had never caused him to be distinguished?

When

When Mr. Pitt entered into public life, he found a House of Commons at war with public opinion. But as the payment of the interest of the funded debt is a nearer and more comprehensible good than the purity of one branch of the legislature; so the failure of public credit was an evil much more generally dreaded than an unfaithful representation. Mr. Pitt did what was to be done—*ad captandos animos*. And those whom he disgusted by his declamations upon the dangerous constitution of the House of Commons, he conciliated by his homilies upon national thrift. On the strength of plans projected by Lord Shelburne, and of private communications from Dr. Price, he set up forthwith for a practitioner in finance; and it is easy to understand how, by assuming this double part of *financier-reformer*, he would obtain credit both for prudence and for principle.

The two-faced idol did not, however, remain long in its original state. The injuries of a few years defaced one of the countenances: the pious credulity of the people taught them to close their eyes when they approached the other; and till lately they believed that it continued entire*.

We cannot wonder, and it is not worth while to be chagrined, at the obstinacy of a *past* delusion. In an affair of accompts, very few will have con-

* Mr. Burke has stooped with the vulgar in adoration of this propitious FISCAL JANUS. "If any thing defensive in our domestic system can save us from the disasters of a regicide peace, he (Mr. Pitt) is the man to save us. If the finances, in such a case, can be repaired, he is the man to repair them." (Reg. Peace, p. 135.)—Mr. Burke is the ablest posture-master of propositions I know. He usually amuses his readers and himself with placing every opinion, of which he is at the moment convinced, in a variety of attitudes. From the little pains he takes to shew off this popular error, I conclude we may be certain that he picked it up out of pure complaisance, because he happened to meet with it on his road.

stancy to submit to a laborious examination of the merits of men and things. Otherwise we need not have waited for the stoppage of the Bank to understand what obligations we were under to him on the score of public credit.

In 1795, soon after a reperusal of the report of Mr. Pitt's speech on his revival of the scheme of a sinking fund, I met with Mr. S——, a Spanish gentleman, a great master of the pencil; I proposed to him a subject for the exercise of his art, suggested by a comparison of the speech with the prospect of public affairs. Soon afterwards he sent me a neat design, in which the following are the principal figures: in the centre stands a column, ornamented with death's heads, and surrounded by analogous emblems of disastrous war, as torn streamers, and broken gun carriages; on the right is a naked and hungry rabble; on the left, a crowd of stock-brokers and monied-interest men. At some distance stands a solitary figure fixed in astonishment at the insensibility of this groupe to their danger from the falling of the broken shaft, which is seen inclined towards their side. The inscription is as follows: I AM UNCOMMONLY HAPPY TO FLATTER MYSELF THAT MY NAME MAY BE INSCRIBED UPON THAT FIRM COLUMN NOW ABOUT TO BE RAISED TO NATIONAL FAITH AND NATIONAL PROSPERITY.

I need not *now* expatiate on Mr. Pitt's financial knowledge, as it has been exhibited with regard both to English or French affairs. The events in the two countries have doubly decided his reputation. If his administration furnished no corresponding facts, these would determine historians, in summing up his character, to represent him as *presuming* and *shallow*.

From the doctrines respecting the House of Commons, which he has at different times maintained, we obtain an illustration no less striking of the
moral

moral nature of the declaimer. There are inconsistencies of opinion, and of conduct, which afford honourable proof of progressive wisdom. But there are also inconsistencies which no less loudly proclaim progressive wickedness. No instance, I believe, of departure from solemn professions has made more noise in the world than that of the matron of Ephesus. Though less renowned, I place beside it, as equal in degree, the example of Robespierre, first warmly pleading for the abolition of the punishment of death, and afterwards judicially murdering his innocent countrymen and countrywomen by tens, by scores, and by hundreds at a time. Not less inconsistent than either is the man, who, after repeatedly devoting an assembly, particularly constituted, to the suspicion of his fellow-citizens, shall compliment that identical assembly, as a body in whose political wisdom and patriotic virtue it were infatuation or desperate criminality not to place implicit confidence. What, if he who, at one time, calls upon you by every private and public tie to *distrust*, and at another to *trust*, shall have been so circumstanced as to speak, in the first case, from pure conviction; in the second, from the interest of his ambition? Shall we ascribe his inconsistency to the improvement of his understanding, or the depravation of his heart?

For the Ephesian matron it were easy to find an excuse which some readers would accept as a complete defence, and others would interpret into a panegyric. In devoting herself to the memory of her husband—in forwarding his corpse to the post of infamy, she gave herself without reserve to her tender feelings. She was a lady of sensibility. Amiable sensibility! who will not pardon the foibles of which thou art the occasion? And how many would embrace, as a sister by sentiment, *her* whom kindness of heart betrayed, first into hasty vows,
and

and afterwards into too sudden forgetfulness of those vows?

As to Robespierre, the murderer, I leave his defence, and their own, to the members of that Convention which delayed to wrest from him his misused power. I will, however, in justice, observe, that he is not recorded to have brought to a trial of life and death any of those who afterwards inculcated the doctrines of sparing humanity with which he set out on his way to popularity.

I hope that when Mr. Sheridan, in answer to Mr. Pitt (May 7, 1792), asserted, that "neither in the church, the army, the navy, or any public office, was any appointment given, but in consequence of parliamentary influence," he was refuted on the spot, though that is not reported*; or, perhaps, the assertion was considered as one that might be left to be discredited by its own notorious falsehood. No man ever insisted, like this man, upon the necessity of the House of Commons having one common interest and one common feeling with the people. Would he seduce it from its allegiance of sympathy? he who had so often declared that the salvation of the country and of individuals from utter ruin depended upon measures to secure this legislative body against complaisance towards a minister!

On this part of Mr. Pitt's conduct, I leave general reflections to those who have had opportunity of observing numerous facts. One anecdote I will relate. I have heard a few others of a like nature from the parties principally concerned. When the late Dr. Vansittart, professor of civil law, at Oxford, died, the Honourable Dr. W—— happened to be in London. He had not, he said, the smallest intention to solicit the appointment; but one morn-

* New Annual Register, 1792, p. 115.

ing he was surprised by a visit from Mr. Pitt, whose business was to offer him the professorship. Dr. W—— was a modest, a well-instructed, and, above all, a conscientious man. He had never paid attention to the civil law; and therefore he declined accepting the emolument, till he should determine whether he could submit to the labour necessary to a proper discharge of the trust. Mr. Pitt willingly kept the place vacant till Dr. W—— should have formed his resolution; and took leave, urging the Doctor to accept his offer: Dr. W—— did so, after some interval; and he did also most scrupulously perform the conditions which, in his own mind, he had annexed to the acceptance. I know not if there existed any other person of equal connexions and equal expectations, in regard to parliamentary interest, on whom the office could have been conferred. Still less can I discover whether, if Ulpian had been an obscure and friendless contemporary, Mr. Pitt would have made the same personal application to him in preference to the presumptive heir to a lord.

On the 27th of June, 1794, a day distinguished by the downfall of Robespierre, it was remarked, I think, in the Convention, that “men who are always talking of their own integrity, do not cease to trample that virtue under foot.” No public man in our own country, none, perhaps, in the age in which we live, unless it be the tyrant at whom this observation was levelled, has presumed so much upon the easiness or favourable prepossessions of mankind as Mr. Pitt. None has so loudly pronounced the panegyric of his own probity. In what degree that nobleness of nature, which has been sometimes spoken of as proper to the soil and climate of Britain, has flourished, and what fruits it has matured under his fostering care, is not a thing obscure. We know pretty exactly how far those that have basked in the smile of a statesman, who.

who has so boldly challenged the manly virtues as his portion, can claim affinity with the race which stands characterised as

“ Fierce in their native hardiness of soul.”

We can witness whether, within these few years, the ancient British spirit has beamed from the general eye, or uttered its dictates from the general tongue. Who has not felt whether or not we have been so near reduced to servility of opinion before a minister, that nothing but his follies can have saved us, if, indeed, we are yet safe from his vices? Is it not a circumstance of public notoriety, whether any one could have called his merits into question without some hazard of being reviled as a conspirator, at least in will;—a conspirator of a species, cruel beyond the necessity of his purposes, and eager to celebrate his successes by a jubilee of pillage and massacre?

Mr. Pitt's speeches are remarkable from singularity, which ought not to be overlooked by any class of men in earnest to know what reliance they may place upon him. I have not exactly noticed how many of his exordiums and perorations consist of a declaration of his feelings. But I am mistaken if any other of our orators will be found with sensibility so continually in his mouth. For an example, I refer to the *last* affair of the debts of the Prince of Wales *. Was not this taint of dissimulation produced by anxiety to acquire showy talents, and spread over his whole mind by easy success and immoderate applause?

* A set speech he delivered within a week after the former edition of this pamphlet was published, furnishes an example of the same kind. Refer to any accurate report of the opening of the last budget, and observe with what pomp of affectation he describes his feelings.

Nothing in life is more common or copious than this vein of language: but observe from what lips it flows. You will hear it in every circle. In relating the misfortune of an acquaintance, the persons who conceive such parade likely to answer their purpose are sure to conclude by trying to leave with the hearer an impression of its effects upon their own susceptible nature. "Only think what must have been *my* feelings on the occasion!"—In whom will you remark this ostentation of sensibility? Chiefly, be assured, in the swindler, the toad-eater, the legacy-hunter, in young men and maidens eager to sell themselves into matrimony with the cripple and the dotard. Of such consists the tribe that discharges the dues of benevolence in words, and deems whatever can be purchased by hypocrisy *a bargain*. Those who resemble them in plausibility of demeanour will seldom be found to differ much from them in insidiousness of views.

Many, I am sensible, will be scandalized with this sort of personal scrutiny, on the score merely of politeness. They will feel it as an insufferable rudeness to hint a possibility of resemblance between those base-born cheats, who having begun by courting the people like tribunes, ended by crushing them like decemvirs, and our

Memmi clara propago.

But on so serious a subject men of discernment will not bring their credulity as an offering to mistaken good manners. These analogies they will not either condemn as illiberal, or slight as unwise; nor will they suffer their prudence to be amused by the alleged difficulty of substantiating a charge of duplicity. The case here is in no respect the same, as when an offence against some criminal law is under investigation. The court of practical common
sense

sense is not constituted upon the principles of a commission for gaol delivery. It proceeds, and ought to proceed, upon slenderer proofs: but then its penalties reach not the person of the convict. The sentences it awards are purely defensive or negative: its code may be nearly comprized in a single precept,

Hic niger est; hunc tu, Romane, caveto.

Do not give your confidence to fair professions, for with such do impostors go abroad. Keep the suspected at a distance from your interests: and, as the consequences of fraud are more ruinous, and the temptation stronger, be quicker of suspicion in public concerns than in private.

Those everlasting harangues of Mr. Pitt which terminated in so many abortive propositions for the redress of grievances and wrongs, must have left some impression upon every mind. I am not absurd enough to expect that these passages of his life will simply of themselves render him an object of aversion to "*people of quality, that are born to great estates.*" I touch upon them only as proofs of want of will or of ability to accomplish purposes which he represented as necessary or just. The failure is the more striking in a minister, who has found unexampled ease in carrying into effect measures that had nothing in them of the nature of redress: and I submit it, whether, in the present situation of things, the augury be encouraging. He who has deceived or disappointed one set of men has, so far, given no pledge that he will not deceive or disappoint another. If it be true, that success makes confident, and practice makes perfect, however we may love the treason, we have surely cause to regard the traitor with distrust.

But the history of those days is as "*a tale of other times.*" The schemes that distinguished the
early

early part of the minister's public life seem diminutive, as if thrown into distance by the magnitude of more recent occurrences. Had Mr. Pitt died six years ago, he would have carried with him to the grave the reputation of being equal to so trying a period. The successes of the enemy; the sudden crash of so many flourishing houses at one season; the deep injury to public credit at another; the late scarcity; the present want of specie; our bootless negotiations for peace; the prospect of hostilities not determinable but in the utter ruin of the weaker party; our terrors and disasters; would each, in its turn, have done honour to his memory. The people would have continually visited his tomb in idea; and pausing over every circumstance of our afflicted state, they would have said—*This had never happened, had Mr. Pitt but lived!*

The historian, as he could not, like the contemporary vulgar, be fascinated by illusions inseparable from the person of the minister, would have found in Mr. Pitt's career, had it closed in 1791, subject for ridicule instead of regret. Protestations of devotion to the people have been much too regularly succeeded by encroachments on popular rights, and by aggravations of public burdens, to leave us in any uncertainty about their value. In the supposed case, however, must not the deaf and blind fury of the British cabinet have infallibly led an unbiaſſed thinker to a speculation of the following tendency? "We have traced the continental despots in their first movements; and we have seen that '*the Wonder of the Isle*' had not genius and magnanimity to avail himself of that cheap opportunity to exalt his country above all ancient and all modern fame. Nevertheless, we may presume that a return of his early parliamentary feelings would have prevented him from persisting, with the insanity of his successors, to set all

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the forces of the physical and moral world at defiance. If he had not altogether avoided a perilous contest, he would have terminated it, while yet he could dictate the conditions of peace. That astonishing reverse in the *internal* situation of the belligerent powers took place by gradations too palpable to escape ordinary penetration. And for a considerable period, it was not much more difficult to stop than to detect the progress of ruin. His country, therefore, has, it must be confessed, abundant cause to lament the premature loss of the only member of her councils, in favour of whose capacity there were any specious appearances, or whose incapacity had not been evinced by the experience of a similar crisis." To him, who has traced to its formation, or deduced from his conduct, the false and hollow character of the minister, it cannot be obscure why he has thus disgraced all conjecture. Spoiled child of unruffled prosperity! he could easily extract out of circumstances an apology to himself for miscarriage in his Russian adventure. The rest was all calculated to fill him with a persuasion, that he should not find in his opponents more sense than in his admirers, or more spirit than in his tools.

However strenuously it may be denied, that a depraved heart, elated by the ready success of those artifices by which he has managed for a season to exalt himself and degrade his rivals, furnishes the clue to Mr. Pitt's recent conduct, one truth must be admitted. That OUR MISFORTUNES SPRING FROM THE ROOT OF FATALLY FALSE VIEWS, stands clear of all precariousness of reasoning concerning motives. We have been led, campaign after campaign, from error to error, from one disappointment to another. After tracing the thorny maze till we are faint with labour and loss of blood, we find ourselves farther from the goal than at setting out.

out. It was to the humiliation of the enemy, if not to the dismemberment of his territory, that we at first looked forward. We have seen the base of that enemy's power extended by additions more than equal to a moderate state; and does not his fame in arms, at this moment, transcend his high traditional renown*? Such has been the result of our military schemes.—We have tried pacific overtures; and they, in conformity to the same rule, have served but to rekindle his flagging animosity. *Such* facts deserve the most scrupulous examination. Their connexion and bearings may enable us to comprehend how far an administration, whose conduct is made up of these disastrous riddles, can be our strength in war, or our safeguard in peace.

For unfolding the character of our formidable adversary, there are other good reasons besides the purpose of a comparison with the conceptions of ministry. I presume to think that it has been entirely misconceived by a politician, superior to Mr. Pitt in the philosophy of history by as many degrees as he may be inferior in the practice of intrigue. His eloquent misstatements doubtless quickened the general eagerness of the great to join the minister. May not the same cause still operate to prevent them from deserting so dangerous a leader?

In most of the transactions which history records, the people are passive instruments in the hands of a few individuals, in whom, not only the national peculiarities, but the general traces of humanity, are pretty well obliterated. It may, therefore, be the more difficult, by the help of historical records, to ascertain the qualities that predominate at large in the different masses of mankind. Among the few instances, however, in which they are prominent and easy to be ascertained, the present is to be numbered.

* *Ingentes GALLORUM glorias.—Tacitus.*

While

While the repulsive genius of the feudal aristocracy operated in full force upon other regions, the component parts of France were drawn into a degree of union, and pervaded by a common feeling. This as yet rude and imperfectly animated whole, the romantic or satirical strains of the Troubadours and the Courts of Love, seem to have informed with new life, and to have impressed with an indelible character*. The mind of the people, we are certain, was wrought, centuries ago, to a very lofty pitch, and if it ever suffered depression, it soon mounted up again to its standard elevation. By degrees, was formed that habit of enthusiasm, in which lies the strength and weakness, the good and evil of the French character. Hence the readiness to fly out beyond the limits within which other nations restrain both their feelings and the expression of those feelings. Hence excess of ferocity and excess of frivolity, virulence of rancour, and womanishness of sympathy. Hence centaur compounds of the mountebank and the knight-errant; and the *ape* and *tiger* traits, noticed by VOLTAIRE. To each horrid barbarity, each heroic exploit, each ludicrous spectacle, exhibited during the troubles of our time, a parallel may be quoted from the annals of every one of the last twenty generations. The crusades and chivalry shew this people always foremost in adventure. Scarce one of their numerous wars but has had its Amazons. Even modern discipline cannot rein in the headlong heroism of individuals. How often have privates, officers, and generals, during the present contest, rushed forward singly to encounter the worst hazards of battle! and how many thousand champions *without fear and without reproach* have rallied round the cradle of freedom! To this hour the history

* See Mr. Woltman's Hist. Essay on this subject, in Schiller's Horen. for 1795, St. 5.

of Joan of Arc retains something of a supernatural air. Yet Joan only united the powers of a religious miracle and a maiden hero. Her appearance was but an experiment of the effects of gallantry and fanaticism on a nation, of which we know that, by other incentives, it may be roused in a mass, with equal ardour, to expel an invader from its soil. In the conduct of their superiors at a former period, the *poissardes* had a precedent for their disgusting inhumanity on the day of the Thuilleries. The ladies of the court were seen, on the morrow of St. Bartholomew, to flock in groups round the murdered nobles, with whom they had been lately coquetting; and they were heard to jest upon the appearance of the corpses!

The writer, on whose authority we, on this side the water, have been generally content to take up our ideas of Jacobinism, is fond of enlarging on certain recent exhibitions at Paris. "No mechanical means," he observes, "could be devised in favour of this incredible system of wickedness that has not been employed."—"All sorts of shews and exhibitions, calculated to inflame and vitiate the imagination, and pervert the moral sense, have been contrived."—"In mockery of all religion, they institute impious, blasphemous, indecent, theatric rites, in honour of their vitiated, perverted reason, and erect altars to the personification of their own corrupted and bloody republic." *Burke's Reg. Peace*, pp. 99, 100.

In other passages and pamphlets the author has more in the same style. But he ought to have known, and knowing, he ought to have told, that these are no devices of the "new French legislators." They have descended in a right line from loyalty and superstition to republicanism and infidelity. These shapes and scenes have ever been the joy of an ingenious people. Their lively fancy has

has been accustomed, from the dark ages downwards, to display itself in extravagancies of a taste equally vile.

Early in the fourteenth century the streets of Paris were strewn and illuminated for a spectacle, of which a full description would be too shocking, even for the lax piety of this age. The Son of God was shewn in one place, raising and judging the dead; in another, saying the Lord's Prayer with his disciples; in a third, eating sugar-plums and at play with his mother. You had besides heaven and hell; Adam and Eve, in their state of innocence; here a herd of savages fighting over their victuals; there, courtezans displaying their seductive arts. As an accompaniment to all this, a fox was exhibited; first in the garb of an undignified divine, then as bishop, afterwards as archbishop, and lastly, in the attire of the holy father himself. The reason for each successive advance is the greater and greater havoc he makes among the pullets. But a religious solemnity, long and generally celebrated in France, defeats the whole claim of Mr. Burke's Jacobin processions to originality. In commemoration of the flight of the Virgin Mary into Egypt, the most beautiful damsel of the place, clad in costly attire, was mounted upon a richly caparisoned ass. This captivating representative of the mother of the Messiah was attended by the clergy and people to the metropolitan church. It is not to my purpose to relate how the congregation, instead of saying Amen, exerted themselves to bray, and how much their devotion was enlivened if the ass sounded a genuine note. But it is clear, that personifications of abstract entities by nature's statuary, are no Jacobin inventions, but mere "antique pageantries." And if *the age of chivalry be past*, the enthusiasm of the age of chivalry has not been extinguished. The subjects of a monarchy

lost, as we have felt, nothing of their ardour by being transmuted into citizens of a republic. It is true, ten thousand swords were no longer ready to leap out of the scabbard to avenge a look rudely cast on a beautiful and high-born dame. The chivalry of the wearers was, in this instance, tempered by their moral feelings. They had been taught (I know not whether by calumnious rumours) that she was an habitual violator of all her public and all her private duties. Liberty, however, acquired more votaries than beauty lost. And no sooner was insult offered to this new object of adoration, than there

————— out flew
Millions of flaming swords.

An alteration in its application is no proof that a power is lost or impaired. A mistress may be abandoned without detriment to the amorous propensity. We every day see individuals exerting equal ardour in the most opposite pursuits. If that abject devotion to kings, for which the French were so long the contempt of Englishmen, has been renounced,

And Seine, no more obsequious as he runs,
Pour at GREAT BOURBON'S feet his silken sons ;

such change of inclination does not prove that the actuating principle of the French character is destroyed.

Loyalty consists in attachment to particular political institutions, united with a reverential regard for those who exercise the highest functions of government. The grand law* of the drama holds in this, as it does in many other situations of real life. The unseen dead letter little moves the po-

* *Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem,
Quam quæ sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.*

pulace.

pulace. The living personage, by appealing to sense, gains entire possession of the fancy. The affections easily make a second transition; and loyalty exhibits itself not less in humouring the caprices of the man, than in honouring the authority of the magistrate. Courtiers and priests do not fail to encourage this disposition: greedy of present favour and the rewards of favour, they think or care little about the danger in which their officious flattery is involving their patron.

What is proverbially said of charity applies to loyalty. If this sentiment be to abide the shocks of time and chance, *it should begin at home*. You ought to find, by your own fire-side, reasons for satisfaction with that form of society to which you belong. With every other fashion of loyalty, natural affection wages an eternal war; and, sooner or later, will she gain a terrible victory. It is a forced and precarious state, when a man is cajoled to seek his own happiness in the feelings of another. We have witnessed in our day the effects of this immoral and impious strain of hypocrisy. How much better had it been for the race of Capet, if the people of France had never been so sunk in political superstition, as to offer up themselves and their children to every whim of glory and ambition that happened to enter into the heart of their sovereign! I doubt not, but an indignant sense of the gross adulation paid by his forefathers to Louis XIV. has embittered many a Frenchman against Louis XVI. Nothing is more common than this unjust transfer of revenge; and our feelings, when new, are constantly apt to run into excess. Among the recent converts to Christianity, none treated the statues of Jupiter with so much indignity as those who had been the most devout pagans. And, at the Reformation, persecution was drawn down upon many an unoffending papist, by

2

detestation

detestation of the successful frauds of the old agents of popery.

Upon this statement I appeal to the reader's prudential feelings. To the case of a people, born with a temperament so sanguine, and placed in circumstances more irritating than those which converted Dutch and American phlegm into fire, how would he apply the maxims by which he regulates his actions? None but a lunatic would adopt the style of the negro-driver, who is brandishing the whip over a recovered runaway slave. The negro-driver himself would not let his vengeance so freely loose, if he supposed there was the least chance of his scurrility and violence being retorted. Nor is there any human motive for the conduct of the British ministry, but an assurance of the same kind. That they felt confident of having the enemy completely at their mercy, is positively proved by their repeated assertions. Of these assertions, which occur in a variety of speeches, and in public papers, Lord Auckland's hectoring declaration*, with the justificative comments of Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt, forms the most curious repository. Mr. Dundas, whom neither the general effect of years nor special experience could render wary, chimes in with the stupid and insolent temerity of his associates. The war *must*, he is certain, be *successful* and *glorious*†. They did not trust to menaces alone. In the true taste of politicians of their leaven, they held forth lures which, to a nation that felt its right and its

* "Some of these detestable regicides are now in such a situation *that they can be subjected to the sword of the law*. The rest are still in the midst of a people whom they have plunged into an abyss of evils, and for whom famine, anarchy, and civil war, are about to prepare new calamities. In short, every thing that we see happen induces us to consider *as not far distant the end of these wretches*," &c. April 5, 1793. See also Debrett's Lords Debates of June 17, and Commons Debates of April 25, 1793.

† Debates, December 19, 1793.

power to give itself a government, must have been a thousand times more provoking than all their abuse. It deserves remark, that the very same clumsy combination of expedients had been tried in the last war. Lord Hood's proclamation, melted into a mass with Lord Auckland's declaration, would form exactly such an alloy as that by which William Eden, Esq. and his fellow-commissioners, operated upon the hopes and fears of America. Neither set of these notable political magnetisers could bring on the desired crisis. Unluckily their subjects wanted faith. The one nation was as incredulous to the "*sensibility of the coalesced powers to its dreadful situation,*" as the other to that "*benevolence of Great Britain which checked the extremes of war, rather than distress a people still considered as fellow-subjects.*" I do not recollect whether the school treatises of oratory furnish a scale of insults. But surely the persons, whose *instructions* * could suggest such compositions, might, by some chance, have learned that there are natures which nothing stings so much as the arrogance of pretended pity.

The absurdity of attempting to subdue a lofty-spirited people, by the brute discipline of stripes and fops, is now felt by those who could not anticipate it. Of this scheme of policy the consequences are not less important than obvious. Can it be a question, whether one, so incapable as Mr. Pitt has proved himself, of entering into the strongest feelings of human beings, is fit to regulate their most important relations? Or, are the feelings of individuals no longer the springs of society? And do we in no wise risque the disorder of the vast machine, by entrusting it to the hands of a man, unacquainted with the force and bearing of its

* Lord Grenville is stated to have said, that Lord Auckland's declaration was in the spirit of his instructions, though not in the letter. June 17, 1793.

moving powers?—I assume, that the rich now desire peace from apprehension, as ardently as the poor have long desired it from suffering. What then is the description of the minister, under whose auspices the negotiators would meet with the *least* chance of accomplishing their object? Is it not of him whose foul-mouthed invectives have been reinforced by a series of public papers, which, “taken together, convey no distinct idea, except that of extending absolute power, and encouraging unlimited monarchy *?” Is it not of him, who to one of the parties that are to contract has become less detestable only as he became more contemptible? Without doubt, then, it must be obvious to common sense, that anxiety to remove such an obstacle to pacification is the only sure token of a disposition to extricate ourselves from the distresses and hazards of war.

But the obstacle in question is also an obstacle in a sense totally distinct from the mere process of negotiation. Whoever possesses the useful talent of transporting himself by imagination into the track of other men’s thoughts, must become sensible, that *the present minister is the grand reliance of the enemy*; and, consequently, that his disgrace would make a stronger impression in our favour than the most vigorous military preparations. Can we flatter ourselves that the depression of Great Britain, and the concomitant elevation of her rival, have proceeded at a rate so slow, and from causes so obscure, as to escape the Directory? Has not that body the saga-

* Marquis of Lansdowne, Feb. 17, 1794. Some passages in the papers are categorical enough, as to the intention of imposing a government upon France; and by these the French would fix the sense of the rest. “They (the coalesced powers) see no other remedy but the re-establishment of the French monarchy. *It is for this*, and the acts of aggression committed by the executive power of France, that *we* have armed, in conjunction with other powers.” Lord Hood, Aug. 23, 1793.

city to connect our West India expeditions*, and our subsidies, with the confiscation of the specie due to the creditors of our national bank? Cannot they trace the last calamity to the crude conceptions of one overweening mind? Do they not consider it as the sure forerunner of others similar? Are they not looking with confident expectation to the moment when England shall be rendered so sick at heart that life shall spontaneously desert her extremities? Have they not the security of direct experience, that the war cannot long be continued by *its present conductors* without our dependencies either dropping off at the least touch of violence, or draining the mother-country into a state of irremediable exhaustion? In retaliating imitation of an adversary's councils, they may be more intent upon the ruin of England than the welfare of France; and, although I do not take the result of Lord Malmesbury's mission to be any test of their feelings, I have considered them as utterly indisposed to treat with Mr. Pitt, ever since they have felt secure at home. The subsequent rapid amelioration in the condition of France might well induce them to oblige our minister to take time to consummate the work in which he had visibly advanced so far. Upon this speculation is it improbable they will refuse *him* the terms they would concede to any other man? I say *any other man*, supposing that, in the eye both of the enemy and of the bystanding nations, he must rank among the most despicable of politicians. And I propose my conjecture to his powerful patrons, because I suspect, that sooner than abandon his post he would prove false to both parts of his nature, and *sincerely negotiate upon his knees*. What, though he should lick the dust from the feet of regicides, whom he has

* See Mr. Burke's additional half-sheet of bitter, but just, invective against our expensive acquisition of these expensive "tropical cemeteries." *Reg. Peace.*

been these five years vilifying? has not his tongue already been employed in offices as opposite?

I observe further, that, on any scheme, the present minister must henceforth labour under a peculiar and a most serious disadvantage. For he has mistaken the English no less than the French * character.

* I have only shewn how grossly he mistook the *spirit* of the French. He equally miscalculated their *means* and their *intelligence*. Of his wild errors concerning the effect of the depreciation of assignats, the theme of so many puffy orations, the whole world is fully apprised. "We went about asking when assignats would expire, and we laughed at the last price of them. But what signified the fate of those tickets?" In such a contest, every man, undebauched by intrigue, must have felt that the indications of conduct were not to be taken from the credit of paper-money, but the pulses of the soul. I should suppose many coal-heavers were instinctively certain that the enemy would not give up resistance till they experienced an almost total failure

Of man and steel, the soldier and his sword.

It is, in my mind, quite natural that a statesman who looks but to the revenue for the state of the body politic, and at the revenue but with the eye of an exciseman, should commit errors which a coal-heaver would have avoided.

The minister does appear to possess enough of the common-place of natural philosophy to garnish his orations with variety of allusions. From certain facts it seems not improbable that, in common with several of his fellows, he harbours a HUNNISH abhorrence of every thing like science. This would imply a two-fold disqualification for conducting such a war as the present. He could not bring forward the scientific ability of this country; and what chance had he of computing the enemy's resources of offence and defence, when so great a part of both consisted in deep mathematical, mechanical, and chemical skill, and in the talent of applying such skill? The times required the great expanded mind of a VERULAM.

The temporary success of Mr. Pitt's practices at home might make him conceit he could produce similar effects by similar means abroad. But the French were deaf to his lamentations over their evils, and his offers to apply a remedy. They spurned with high disdain the *εχθρων αιδωρα δωρα*. Nor would they be content to take what they endured from aggression, and from domestic tyrants whom aggression raised to power, for an effect of liberty. The scheme of sickening the French of liberty, like all the rest, produced an effect contrary to what the projector intended. It only
animated

character. He must have fancied that we should hold ourselves bound to him, whatever might betide for better and for worse; and that we should never dream of suing for a divorce. But, as is usual with persons of his class, he has undeceived by deeds those whom he had deceived by words. Nor will an opinion, reluctantly formed upon close acquaintance, be hastily dismissed.

It has been justly observed by Mr. Burke, that "no war *can* long be carried on against the will of the people;" and that "this war in particular cannot be carried on unless they are enthusiastically in favour of it." (*Reg. Peace*, p. 65.) Whether the people are sobered out of their enthusiasm is now no longer, I hope, a question. But whatever may be their feelings towards any measure, dislike to the minister who is to carry it into effect, would choak enthusiasm in its birth. Here then is a political *study* for those who have adhered to Mr. Pitt as their temporal saviour—an unpopular war, an obnoxious minister, an enemy that has waxed stronger in the struggle, a difficulty (approaching to an impossibility) of supplies, a state of public credit, commerce, manufactures, and probably of revenue, such as threatens a privation of *artificial* resources, and a country comparatively weak in *natural* means of carrying on a great and costly war. History does not furnish the issue of such a crisis. But can prudence draw no instruction from the nature of things? I am much deceived if it be not the clear answer of this unerring oracle, that Mr. Pitt cannot force for-

animated them with fiercer indignation against those who inter-meddled in their affairs. Upon the merit or demerit of their fortitude, I appeal to the opinion that shall prevail through Europe in 1800. To their dreadful provisional sufferings they were, doubtless, not less sensible than the pack of British orators. But from the dreary wilderness of anarchy, they would not be yelped back to the refuge of their old Egyptian bondage. By pushing forward they hoped to emerge into the land of promise.

ward without danger of overthrowing society at every step. What! will not new burdens, fresh vexations, distress increasing, and *his* administration prolonged, four more and more the public temper? Will not discontent grow more and more importunate? Will not he oppose to this annoyance rigorous laws and severe exertions of authority? The probable or possible termination of this action and re-action, I leave to the opulent to consider, sincerely wishing their timely exertions may prevent what otherwise the chroniclers of Mr. Pitt's revolutionary career might have to record. One of his flatterers has suggested to him the desperate consolation of a monument of ruins. I know not whether this, intentionally or unintentionally, will be his end. But I am sure that neither the enemy, nor neutral nations, nor unborn ages, will waste a single sigh over his fate.

No point in politics was ever more warmly contested, and none has been more perfectly settled, than the credit due to Lord North's public talents. This uniformity of opinion seems deserving of the attention of that class to whom I address these reflections. Lord North may serve as an easy and exact standard of comparison for Mr. Pitt. Had his Lordship been effectually and seasonably employed in this capacity, his memory would perhaps have been more useful to his country than his life was injurious. I will try if he can now be turned to any account.

1. Twenty years ago, it was *who but Lord North?*

1. Till lately, it was *who but Mr. Pitt?*—Pitt for ever!

2. In Lord North's time, as long as peace was preserved, the poor laboured, the rich traded, and the nation prospered.

2. In Mr. Pitt's time, as long as peace was preserved, the poor laboured, the rich traded, and the country prospered.

To what, in both cases, was the national prosperity owing? To what but the industry, enterprise, and genius of individuals, unmolested by this wild and wasteful work of war? Had these ministers been both roaming the deserts of Grand Tartary all their lives, our prosperity would have been just the same, so we had had just as much peace. The business of commercial treaties and regulations would have been transacted full as well by others as by Mr. Pitt. But what other minister would have presumed to stand forward as the creator of our prosperity; or what other, avowing such pretensions, would have failed to be scouted by our insulted manufacturers and merchants as a shameless charlatan?

3. Lord North was unimpeachable in his domestic relations.

3. Mr. Pitt, for what I know, is so too. Of his fraternal affection, a certain blushing book once bore an unequivocal proof. This fact alone is decisive of his public integrity.

4. How did our lords and ladies, our squires and dames, our yeomanry and commonalty, once join in full chorus to Lord North, as a man of business, a capital orator, and an incomparable financier! How many thousand wretches paid with life and limb for this full-mouthed folly!

4. And Mr. Pitt is such a man of business, such an orator! *such* a financier! that, heaven forgive our ingratitude, we have almost forgotten his noble predecessor. Doubtless, to take money out of the people's pocket, while it contains any, is an admirable feat for a man who has the law for his clutch. The late King of Prussia used to define an English general, *any man you please in a blue coat faced with red*. And an English financier his Majesty might have defined—*any man who can propose heavy taxes in a long speech*.

5. During

5. During peace Lord North paid off about ten millions of the national debt. In eight years of war he added ten pounds for every pound he took off.

5. During peace Mr. Pitt paid off some twenty millions. In five years of war he has added six or eight pounds for every pound he took off.

6. Lord North's helpmates were Dundas, Jenkinson, Wedderburne, with some others now dead.

6. Who are Mr. Pitt's helpmates? The same Dundas, the same Jenkinson, the same Wedderburne. Were the rest alive, they would, I doubt not, give Mr. Pitt as effectual aid to overcome the French, as they did Lord North to overcome the Americans.

7. This campaign, and that campaign, the Americans, we were told, were to be brought to our feet.

7. In like manner, according to Mr. Pitt, the French were at their last gasp any time for three whole years. At one period they were to be famished to death. Then atrophy, the paper-palsy, and convulsions, were, each in turn, to be their end. Alas! that Political Foresight should so rarely have had lodgings in Downing-street.

8. Last war,

8. And this war, the British navy has upheld its ancient fame. Next war, whether wise men or fools are at the helm, the national song will be

Rule, Britannia, rule the waves.

9. Lord North let slip every opportunity for putting an end to bloodshed. He repeatedly offered what, some months sooner, would have been accepted.

9. The most glorious opportunity that ever occurred to mortal man for composing the troubles of the world presented itself to Mr. Pitt! and he was solicited to embrace it! He has gone on, adding

adding neglect to neglect, and how dear will he have made his country buy the hard conditions she must at last receive!

10. Neither Lord North,

10. Nor Mr. Pitt, understood, nor would they ever learn, with whom they had to deal. On what occasion was either tried, and did not fail, unless when it was expedient to make a cajoling speech?

11. What the better were the needy and the miserable for Lord North?

11. How many poor men—*honest*, poor men—ever profited by any scheme of Mr. Pitt's? From 1784 to 1792 the wretchedness of the poor went on uniformly increasing, and as fast, at least, as the exports and imports. Compare this with Mr. Pitt's eternal professions; and if you have a sense for human wickedness and woe, your first feeling will be impatience for dead and living nature to come and help you to curse.

12. Our fathers! your sons call upon you, in the name of common sense, and by the irreparable evils your credulity has entailed upon posterity, to declare why, at the commencement and during the progress of the American war, you put confidence in Lord North.

12. Desirous of an individual's share in the welfare, and not in the calamities of my country, I wished, five years ago, that the first boy, from the nearest blue school, should be minister of the country rather than Mr. Pitt. I am mistaken if those who refer to the true test of a minister's merit, the domestic condition of the whole people, can condemn this wish, as contrary to prudence or patriotism.

13. Lord North never instigated the people to contempt of one branch of the legislature, as then constituted. Lord North never recommended it to the people "to assemble in districts, because it was in vain to look to parliament for a regeneration

ration originating within itself. Lord North, after teaching that nothing honest was to be expected from a certain body, did never insist that the dearest interests of mankind might be safely committed to that body. Lord North never attempted to cement the system of borough-monging by ———,

13. — — — — —

14. Lord North did never boast of having placed public credit on a rock, and afterwards bring the establishment upon which public credit depends to stop payment.

14. — — — — —

15. Lord North never called down “the indignation of a great suffering people,” and “the vengeance of the Almighty, upon the heads” of certain persons, and afterwards joined all that were left alive of the same junto in a system, similarly, but far more sweepingly destructive than that in which he charged them with the guilt of being engaged.

15. — — — — —

In addition to this parallel, which I have endeavoured to form on just and pertinent grounds of resemblance, I shall address a few questions to the prudence of the rich ministerialists*.

* I am by no means insensible to the merit of the enlightened opponents of the minister among the opulent and the noble. But as their efforts have produced no apparent effect, I have all along considered the infatuation of the majority as the infatuation of the whole. To a person not aware that ignorance will always misjudge, it must seem unaccountable that the honour of the wife, and the benefit resulting from their counsels, should be alike *posthumous*—that a North and a Pitt, aiming at an impossible end by destructive means, should, for a season, have more influence, even with the devoted populace, than a Shelburne or a Fox, a Dundas than a Grey, a Jenkinson than a Lauderdale, a Wedderburne than a Dunning, a Wilberforce than a Saville.

Did

Did ever minister, in a country where the right of expressing an opinion on public affairs was acknowledged, proceed through such a course as Mr. Pitt's five last years with so little interruption?

Is it less evident that he stands fully condemned by a vast majority of the middling and lower classes, than that he has had free scope to work out his own damnation?

By what possible motives, in opposition to sense and feeling, can this multitude be reclaimed to confidence in Mr. Pitt?

Would a violent suppression of discontent be practicable? would it be safe?

May not the great loss much more by the consequences of a distraction of public sentiment, than they can gain from ministerial bounty?

Did they conceive it possible that the adversity of April, 1797, could have followed so close upon the prosperity of April, 1792?

In a long and intricate suit of law, would they trust a solicitor, who had mismanaged all the first proceedings, with its further prosecution? Or would they feel this as an irresistible motive for putting the affair into other hands?

How could French wickedness be an excuse for English folly?

Would they have been guided by Mr. Pitt, if they had foreseen that he would have reduced us to our present state?

Would they have acquiesced in each and all of the following blunders of omission and commission:

In the refusal to interpose, on account of a punctilio, at the request of Louis XVI. between the German despots and France.

In the haughty dismissal of M. Chauvelin?

In negativing Mr. Fox's motion for sending a minister to Paris?

In refusing to receive M. Maret?

H

In

In inattention to M. le Brun's almost supplicating letters?

In not concluding a glorious peace after the capture of Valenciennes?

In Mr. Pitt's neglecting so many opportunities of securing immortal honour, and inestimable advantages to his country, and that probably from ideas of conquest scarce consistent with sanity?

In his not acknowledging the republic when all internal commotions were subdued?

In leaving the object of the war in perpetual obscurity, and the contradictory mass of declarations without a full explanation; in consequence of which the enemy must impute to us the utmost malignity of intention?

In Lord Malmesbury's not carrying our ultimatum with him to Paris?

In insisting on the restoration of Belgium as an *indispensable* preliminary to peace, when we had no probable means of enforcing the condition?

In delaying to make the best peace that could be made at the time being, till the coalition was finally dissolved?

In that imbecility which seconded the long obvious design of reserving Britain for full and final vengeance?

Do the rich ministerialists really look upon the state-pilot, who, in defiance of unceasing remonstrances and of the most evident appearances—*proiecit patriam*—has persisted in running his country on the breakers, the fittest person to steer us back into calm water?

Can they imagine that by so immense a profusion of treasure, and such dreadful havoc of the human species, the minister has lessened one external or one internal danger?

If not, why do they not unite immediately with the people in all legal endeavours to remove him from the helm?

Do

Do they think Mr. Pitt more trust-worthy because he has been always surrounded by a little groupe of pietists? Do they not know that the most bloody of tyrants had the cant and the leer of a modern saint *? Do they suppose the people ignorant that fraud is oftener found under a religious mask than grace? And are not the orgies of the late Shrewsbury election, a proof that methodism is no safeguard against the lowest of the political passions?

Are the minister's well-wishers held in suspense by compassion? Doubtless this sentiment will affect every thinking mind. When I consider Mr. Pitt *abstractedly*, and compare what he is with what a wise and uncorrupt man in his situation would have been, he fills me with deep commiseration. But I also feel the same sorrowful emotions when I regard the being, whom some critics take to be the hero of *Paradise Lost*, as alone in the universe. Besides, it is often an act of the most sincere friendship to force a man from a situation in which he has disgraced himself. And I am sure Mr. Pitt would be much more the object of compassion, and much less of hatred, in retirement than in power.

IN the foregoing pages I have endeavoured, upon the universally received principles of common prudence and morality, to prove to the rich that their best or only chance of emerging from their present dangers, is to join the rest of the people in attempting to procure a change of ministry. I had intended further to propose an easy and cheap plan

* Il (Robespierre) se fait une reputation d'austérité qui vise à la sainteté. Il monte sur les bancs. Il parle de Dieu et de providence. — Cromwell's case is well known.

for securing internal tranquillity in case of sudden alarms. As far as regards the country, I have been anticipated by Mr. UVEDALE PRICE, a gentleman distinguished by his writings on subjects of taste, and, I suppose, one of the alarmists of 1793. Mr. Price, feeling that the minister has gone on from day to day making our external and our internal situation more insecure, and fearing lest "desperate men," in the confusion which the landing of a foreign enemy would occasion, should be tempted to pillage, proposes to his Herefordshire neighbours the following plan: They should, he says, provide themselves with arms; and meet occasionally on horseback, without arms or any sort of martial parade, in parties of twenty or thirty, just as they would ride out on any other occasion. They may thus habituate their horses to move together, exactly as well as if they were armed and accoutred. Both men and horses would be accustomed to each other, and well prepared for acting against a mob.

The same plan, applied to cities, with the exclusion of horses, would afford at least equal security with the new volunteer corps, with far less trouble and expence. The force might be greater, because many more individuals would and could walk together in an evening now and then in their common dress, leaving their arms at home. The knowledge of their having arms would be a sufficient check upon persons disposed to seize an opportunity for general plunder.

The disorders occasioned by ministers being equally to be dreaded with those occasioned by mobs, and the damages sustained from the former by men's possessions and persons, far greater, it should be understood that such a scheme would indirectly secure our property and liberty against this danger.

The nature of Mr. Price's excellent plan will appear from the following extracts: "Its great advantage

vantage is, that it makes no difference whatsoever in the situation of those who enter into it, either in their way of living or the general disposition of their time."—"It may possibly be proposed to you to have officers appointed by government, or to be attached to the Yeomanry Cavalry. In this case you would, like them, be liable to be commanded out of the county; and so far from consenting to that, you ought not to be commanded in it. For, in my decided opinion, that would destroy the whole advantage of our union. Your place is on your own premises, where your daily occupations are equally useful to your country and to yourselves; and where you are always in readiness to defend what it is your first duty and purpose to protect from every injury, your own and your neighbours' property. The great point, therefore, on which your own welfare, and the use which you may render to your county, depends, is, that you should not be subject to any military regulations, in any shape or form whatsoever, but that you should remain precisely in the same situation in which you are at present, under the controul of the laws, and the direction of the civil magistrate."—*Thoughts on the Defence of Property.*

This, I think, will be felt as the only principle of interior security for a country like Great Britain. None other is consistent with common sense and œconomy, and at the same time efficacious.

APPENDIX.

A P P E N D I X.

NOTE, p. 11.—*Treaty of Pilnitz.*

IT was in March, 1797, that Lord Grenville, I believe the first of our ministry, publicly disclaimed participation in this famous compact. If the measure had not been viewed with hopeful approbation or complacency, why was not such declaration made while it could conciliate?

NOTE, p. 12.—*Apprehension of the Consequences of engaging and persisting in the War.*

A great majority, I believe, of the well-informed and truly independent persons in Great Britain fully anticipated the deplorable consequences of the war. Early in 1792, I well remember the following lines adhering to my memory with that tormenting pertinacity which may be sometimes noticed in imperfect febrile delirium :

“ O alienate from truth ! O spirit accurs'd !
Forsaken of all good ! I see thy fall
Determin'd, and thy hapless crew involv'd
In this perfidious fraud—contagion spread,
Both of thy crime and punishment.”

The practices going busily forward at the end of the summer, 1792, induced me *then* to publish a warning to the people not to be seduced.—I cannot discern the unexpressed wishes of the heart. But if I had been minister, and desirous of *getting up an inclination to war* with France, I would have had that done which Mr. Pitt's parliamentary adherents and personal friends actually did. I would have fired the people, by appeals to their compassion, till they had lost all sense and care of their own safety—The people *were* mad-
dened ;

dened; and what was said to bring them back to their perfect mind, merely rendered them outrageous against their faithful and prudent advisers. Such was the effect of the publication above-mentioned, from which I shall copy a few sentences. They will shew what apprehensions I entertained at that early period. "A paper, soliciting subscriptions for the relief of French refugees, and signed by several respectable names—H. E. Monckton, J. H. Browne, Esq. MM. PP.—Rev. J. C. Woodhouse, Hordern, Molineux, and Bishton, W. B. Taylor—is at present in circulation. Benevolence is doubtless a fine quality; but benevolence, when blind, becomes, at least, useless; and when bigotted, it is pernicious. For the ferment of bigotry can convert charity into uncharitableness."

"If it had been intended to inflame the people of England to the thirst of blood against the French, a more artful method" (than by such addresses) "could not have been devised. Both with respect to the distress of the refugees, and the wickedness which has reduced them to distress, full scope is left to the imagination. And the causes of their distress, conscience and religion, are the most affecting you could choose. I do not charge the promoters of charity with a design to promote bloodshed indirectly. But the vague, ambiguous phrases they have scattered abroad have manifestly such a tendency. It was one of the arts by which the spirits of the people were kept up during the attack upon America. It was the way in which the Birmingham riots were raised. It is the way in which wholesale mischief, whether internal or external, is commonly produced. *It would, perhaps, be prudent in the panegyrists of refractory priests to weigh the possible consequences of a war with France.*"—"I cannot undoubtedly prove that those individual priests who have arrived in England are not *conscientious* and *religious* men. But it is reasonable to believe that the majority partake of the spirit of their brethren. And to a large portion of the (foreign) popish priesthood, Christianity is believed, on good grounds, to be as much *foolishness* as it was to the Greeks.—Had these gentlemen represented the priests as distressed *men* of ambiguous or unknown character, I hope they would have been equally successful in their application. The most vicious, it will be universally allowed, should not be left to die of hunger. Of women and children, of the aged and infirm, the bare mention is a sufficient recommendation."

NOTE

NOTE, p. 44.—*Repression of popular Discontents by arbitrary Laws, and by Vigour beyond the Law.*

It is sufficiently plain that, on the part of ministers, nothing will be wanting to follow out this harsh scheme of policy as far as they dare. Their past conduct affords sufficient proof of their sentiments. Nothing will convince them of the tendency of such a system. But those who support them from *conviction*, would do well to consider the case of France, as stated by Mr. Neckar: "By persons who are inciting the governments of Europe to hasty measures of severity, the example of the French revolution is perpetually quoted in support of their counsel. Let governments but study that example to determine their opinion. They will perceive that the French revolution is essentially due to inconsiderate exertions of authority."

After enumerating a variety of arbitrary proceedings, and shewing that the royal authority was not brought into danger by moderation, Mr. Neckar thus proceeds: "Let persons then be on their guard against pushing sovereigns to extreme resolutions, by insisting on the French revolution. This would be misemploying appearances to divert their attention from the truth. Such reasoning should be left to ignorant or superficial men, who see every thing in a circumstance with which their mind is full.—The real friends of kings will employ the same language as the real friends of nations. Both will say to the depositaries of supreme authority, that unshaken firmness should be joined to perfect reason, and that, in order to risque nothing by an unlimited exertion of power, affairs should be sagely conducted. But if the finances are in disorder; if the public revenue has been dissipated beforehand; if you have only the melancholy alternative of depriving the creditors of the state of a part of their income, or of adding to burdens which the people already support with murmurs; in short, if alarms have gone abroad, and just complaints are heard on all sides, it is then necessary to exercise with prudence the right of commanding, to attend to the discontents which persons in power have themselves caused, and to gain time for restoring to authority the support of confidence. This is the plan of reason; and if it be not followed, but governments, after committing great errors and wrongs, exert their authority with the same rigour as when their power appeared to be the safeguard of public order, they will play a desperate game, and

and engage in a contest of which the issue cannot be foreseen." Fr. Revolution, II. 41. 43.—It would seem as if this solemn admonition had been suggested by the present circumstances of Great Britain. It forms a striking contrast with the rash practices adopted by administration, and the rash doctrines inculcated by their defenders. See, for example, *Gifford's Letter to Erskine*. I notice this pamphlet, because rumour ascribes it to persons in office, and I see some of the periodical publications question the existence of John Gifford, Esq. the pretended author.—Crit. Review for April, 1797. By whomsoever written, it may probably be considered as the manifesto of the Pitt and Portland parties. I have now a copy lying beside me, which was sent *gratis* and *carriage free* from a certain office to a Bristol printer, who, without cutting open a leaf, sold it at a reduced price to a neighbouring bookseller. Yet the writers of a pamphlet which has this sort of forced circulation, (p. 179) reproach ERSKINE'S VIEW [Debreit] with obtaining the credit of numerous editions by insidious management! The practice of abusing others for what we are guilty of ourselves goes on, as if the satirist had never written—

Clodius accusat mœchos.

NOTE—p. 47. *Mr. Pitt did not understand, nor would he ever learn, with whom he had to deal.*

However mean might have been the opinion entertained by any person of Mr. Pitt, as a statesman, his ignorance of human nature, and his incorrigibility, as displayed during the present war, must still have been matter of astonishment. And the oftener the series of occurrences is reviewed in connexion with Mr. Pitt's ideas, the more will this sentiment be strengthened. Such infatuation must be witnessed, in order to be conceived possible.

Certain insults offered to the Roman Catholics in Ireland are equally inconceivable, but upon the same condition. In a pastoral letter to his clergy, Dr. Thomas Hulse, Popish Bishop of Waterford and Lismore (Dublin, Fitzpatrick, 1797), the following passages occur: "The many compulsory means, lately employed (and several instances of them within this very diocese, not many days since) to drive the Catholic military to Protestant places of

worship, alarmed the *true* friends to the King and his service, and every well-wisher to the peace and quiet of the country. Such unwarrantable steps could not make converts of the Catholic military—it might in time make them indifferent to all forms of worship, and thereby jacobinise them upon the French scale, and perhaps in the hour of danger induce them to forget their duty and their loyalty, in order to be revenged of their persecutors.” (P. 5.)

“ If when the ruling party, with insolence in their looks and oppression in their hands, ground them down; even, in these provoking times, if the body of the Catholics remained inflexibly attached to their religion, what have you to dread,” now religious penalties are in good measure removed, and must soon fully be removed? “ That a JUNTO, for their own interested, or other sinister views, *may raise mobs*, to try to throw obstacles against the total repeal of them” (the penalties); “ yet all their efforts must be useless. The vast rock is already detached from the mountain’s brow, and whoever opposes its descent and removal must be crushed by its fall.” (P. 7.)

NOTE—p. 47. *What HONEST poor Man ever profited by any Scheme of Mr. Pitt’s?*

This gentleman’s poor-speech and poor-bill constitute a notable piece of political acting. The observations of Mr. Bellham and Mr. W. Wood, of the Kensington and St. Giles’s parish committees, prove that Mr. Pitt’s scheme would disgrace an overseer who had been six months in office. With respect to the politician’s capacity, the argument deducible from this wretched project holds as fully as if the country had experienced the consequences which must have resulted from it. And we should not forget that, in point of expence, it was, next to a war, the most formidable undertaking in which the public could have been involved.

A concise history of the whole transaction should be composed, in order to shew by one decisive example what a friend those who contribute to the poor rates, and those who are relieved out of them, have in Mr. Pitt. Both parties could easily judge how far it is likely that he had any other motive for interfering in this business than to court popularity by a brilliant speech. Nor was there any sufficient reason why he should shrink from the danger of

committing himself. However good judges might reprobate his scheme, he could not but expect by another speech to bring off his reputation unhurt. Things would be left to go on as before, and the speech-maker would have the credit of just and humane sentiments. It was playing the game which in the cases of parliamentary reform and the slave-trade had turned to so good account.

It is not however to be conceived that any minister would be unwilling that the nation should be relieved from this or that grievance, provided the means of relief do not interfere with his ambition. But what can we expect from a man, entangled in party, and intent upon the maintenance of his parliamentary ascendancy? Is there a possibility that such a man should have spare energy of mind enough to overcome the difficulties that stand in the way of every considerable amendment in the condition of mankind? The *experienced* Mr. Neckar has well expressed himself on this subject. He speaks of a monarch. But the principle is applicable by a slight change of terms to the case of a minister: "It will be said, and by those whom a simple plausibility can seduce or persuade it will be believed, that the royal authority, properly employed, would have destroyed the most inveterate abuses and overcome every species of resistance. But it is not considered that power, to be exerted with unabating energy, must adhere to a will, and ostensibly adhere. Now, in a monarch, such a will can never combine with an idea so abstract and so complicated as the renovation of a system of finance, of administration, or jurisprudence, Richelieu was supported in an arduous enterprise by a weak prince: but this enterprise was in perpetual connexion with a purpose always understood, and cherished by kings—*increase of authority*. The minister who subdued the Great, and humbled the House of Austria, would, doubtless, have provoked his master beyond bearing, if he had called upon him for perseverance merely to render the price of salt uniform throughout the kingdom." (P. 61.)